

SUMMARY: The document below is a letter dated 18 March 1572 written from Antwerp by John Lee to Lord Burghley in which Lee mentions Oxford's intercession with the Queen on behalf of his first cousin, Thomas Howard (1537-1572), 4th Duke of Norfolk, and Oxford's displeasure with Lord Burghley for his refusal to intercede for Norfolk. Oxford's efforts on behalf of Norfolk were in vain. Norfolk was executed on 2 June 1572. From the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, available online:

On 26 January 1572 Norfolk was ceremonially degraded from the Order of the Garter, when his banner of arms, mantles, helm, and crest were cast into the ditch of Windsor Castle. Thereafter he passed his time in organizing his affairs, writing to his servants, especially his steward William Dyx to whom he sent a copy of the New Testament, and receiving visits from Alexander Nowell, dean of St Paul's. Then, on 8 May, parliament assembled. It had been called by a reluctant queen, under pressure to act against Mary Stuart. The House of Commons used the opportunity to agitate relentlessly for the death of the man who had striven to marry her and to advance her cause. Elizabeth finally yielded to pressure, perhaps in the hope that, by sacrificing Thomas Howard to the wolves, she could spare a fellow queen. According to an anonymous eyewitness, '[S]trait after vii a cloke' on the morning of 2 June, and accompanied by Dean Nowell and his old tutor John Foxe, Norfolk addressed the crowd from the scaffold on Tower Hill. Despite attempts to cut him short he acknowledged his faults, but denied the most serious accusations, reaffirmed his protestantism, 'telleth how graciously he is bounde to the Queen's Majestie for the mercie which of her self she hath shewed [and] wissheth her long continuance to the maintenance of religion' (Hartley, 1.332-3). He was beheaded and buried in the chapel of St Peter ad Vincula in the Tower.

In a petition to the Queen, Isabel Frobisher, the first wife of Sir Martin Frobisher (1535?-1594), describes an earlier attempt by Oxford to aid Norfolk:

I Inprimis, that at the time the late Duke of Norfolk was removed out of the Tower to the Charterhouse [=3 August 1570], my husband being prisoner in the Fleet, the Earl of Oxford provided a ship called the Grace of God, and ten pounds was given earnest thereupon, and five hundred pounds more was to be paid for her, my husband's liberty granted, and the ship to be given him with two thousand pounds in ready money, the one half to be paid here, the other to be delivered him at his arrival with the Duke in Spain. My husband opened these dealings to me, and offered to leave me nine hundred pounds of the first payment so that there might no words grow thereon, but I utterly renounced such gain to receive. I had a care of the duty I owe to your Majesty, as also I feared it would be the utter destruction of my husband, so that with dutiful persuasions I caused to let the earnest be lost, and so that enterprise was dashed.

See TNA SP 12/95/92, ff. 202-3.

For the cipher used in the letter, see *CSPD Addenda 1566-79*, pp. 386-7.

Blesseth your Honour, John Lee advertised that Mr Egremont Ratcliffe shall be very shortly sent from hence by the appointment of 25 [=the Duke of Alva] with letters of great importance, as they say, to 15 [=the King of Spain], and 20 [=the Earl of Westmorland] was earnestly persuaded with by a messenger to him sent of purpose from the Spanish ambassador to have taken upon him the carriage of those letters, but he refused the same, for what cause as y[e]t I know not.

Mr Ratcliffe signified to Butler, my man, who hath for the most part by my appointment attended of him ever since my last coming over, for it is not known here that he did at any time attend of me, that he would open his letters by the way, and that he would disclose the secrets thereof, trusting thereby to purchase grace of A. L. [=the Queen]. Whether he will hold his determination herein or no I know not, but I assure your Honour he departed from hence wholly bent so to do.

Further may it please your Honour to understand that Markenfeld is sent from 80 [=the Pope] to 15 [=the King of Spain], and it is thought that 15 [=the King of Spain] will land certain men in Ireland, and also that 80 [=the Pope] will send presently 12 thousand crowns to be employed in 32 [=Scotland], and how that 84 [=Lord Seton] is gone to confer with 62 [=the Regent of Scotland], 75 [=Lord Morton], 72 [=the Scottish King's party] to see if he can procure them to join with 55 [=the Scottish Queen's party] to the behoof of 45 [=the Scottish Queen].

Here was a bruit that 85 [=the Earl of Northumberland] was delivered to F.R. [=Berwick], and how that 84 [=Lord Seton] should be apprehended in England, which caused 30 [=the Countess of Northumberland] to send hither in haste, and both his sons, which remain here as pledges, came hither to learn the truth thereof.

XL(?) [=The Papists in the Low Countries] are in some good hope that some attempt will be shortly taken in hand against A. L. [=the Queen] for that it is given them to understand that the French King manneth out twenty ships of war forthwith, and how that 25 [=the Duke of Alva] hath sent into Germany, as truth is, to take up certain bands both of footmen and horsemen.

Further they affirm that there was like to have been a mutiny the 27th of the last month when it was thought that 70 [=the Duke of Norfolk] should have passed, so that they be fully persuaded that A.L. [=the Queen] dares proceed no further therein at all, affirming that 70 [=the Duke of Norfolk] hath secret friends, and those of the best, and such as may do very much with A.L. [=the Queen], and how that the Earl of Oxford, who hath been a most humble suitor for him, hath conceived some great displeasure against your Honour for the same, whereupon he hath, as they say here, put away from him the Countess, his wife.

What other vain imaginations they have conceived of A.L. [=the Queen] going to see the Earl of Sussex and what words were spoken unto him by A.L. [=the Queen] I spare to

write, nothing misdoubting but that A.L. [=the Queen] resteth in a greater security, which I pray God long to continue, than they imagine for.

Thus having no further to enlarge to your Honour, I must humbly leave you to the tuition of the Almighty, whom I beseech long to preserve you in health with daily increase of honour. From Antwerp the 18th of March 1571 [=1572].

Your Honour's most assuredly to command,

John Lee

Postscript

This day I have received your Honour's letter, for the which I render your Honour most humble thanks. If it might stand with your Honour's pleasure to write 3 or four lines to XXX [= Norton], it may be that it would help me to find out that which as y[e]t I cannot attain to by no means. I most humbly thank your Honor for the provision which I perceive by Mr Leste(?) your Honour hath given for me.

Endorsed: (1) To the right honourable and my very good Lord, the Lord Burghley, give these at the court; (2) 18 martij 1571, John Lee to my Lord from Antwerp.